

THE CHURCH AND COMMUNISM

by

HIS EMINENCE

RICHARD CARDINAL CUSHING

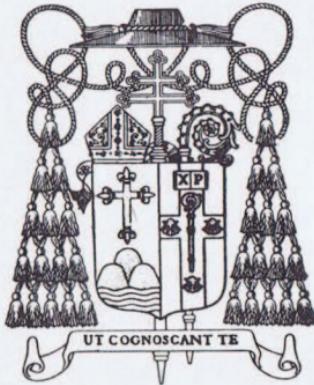


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The author of the first Gospel, Saint Matthew, was a civil servant. He held a post in the provincial administration of the Roman Imperial Government and he was perhaps for that reason particularly conscious of the potential conflict that always lurks under our two greatest loyalties: our loyalty to Caesar and that to God, to the claims of the organized City of Man and to those of the earthly City of God. It was Saint Matthew, appropriately, who noted for us Christ's great Commandment concerning this conflict and included it in his Gospel: *Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.*

Christ's concept of civil society is expanded and applied for our times in many of the most important pronouncements of the modern Popes. Pope Leo XIII wrote often of the Christian Constitution of States, of civil liberties and of the just authority of temporal governments. Pope Benedict XV applied these same great principles to ideas of world government, of a new international civil order within a society of nations. Under Pope Pius XI, Pope Pius XII, and our present Holy Father the divine origin of political authority, the basic principles of true democracy have been de-

fended against the attacks of National Socialism, loose Liberalism, Fascism and Marxist Communism.

The great Pope Pius XI took the measure of the several pagan systems which in our day have exaggerated or perverted the authority of the State. While exhorting the faithful to strict loyalty to the civil authority, as a service to worthy civic loyalty, Pope Pius XI exposed the errors of pagan Fascism, brutal Nazism and atheistic Communism. The first two political heresies have had their dread day and gone. It is well for us now to consider the Pope's encyclical on Communism.

It is the duty of the Church to defend justice and truth. When the Church sees these attacked, she cannot be silent. Over a hundred years ago Pope Pius IX denounced Communism. Over seventy-five years ago Pope Leo XIII denounced Communism. Pius XI wrote his great encyclical to show the differences between Communism and Catholicism; to show that Christian principles, not Marxist theories, save men; Catholic practical idealism, not Communist violence, exalts the temporal society in a manner consistent with human dignity and freedom.

Communists believe what Karl Marx said. Karl Marx said that there is no God; that there is no such thing as a soul; that everything in the world is material. Karl Marx said that the strictly material world is fatally directed by blind forces. No less completely directed by these same blind

forces, men, too, are always changing. Karl Marx said that the society of men is changing, because of internal conflict, into a classless community. Karl Marx said that this change could be speeded up by making each group of men hate the others. He said that "workers" or "proletarians" are by necessity against all other classes. The "workers" or "proletarians" must destroy all other classes and must do this by violence.

In a Communist community, in a State organized on Communist principles, the person loses his freedom. Since nothing exists but matter, a man is no more than matter himself. He has no rights. He has no authority, not even over his family. Lacking either rights or authority save by arbitrary concession of the State, he cannot own anything. If a man has no rights or authority, his marriage has no status of its own. Family life and the care of his children do not belong primarily or particularly to him and his wife. His wife may be drafted to work in the same way as himself. His children must be brought up and educated by the community. In a Communist community a man is only a cog in the State machinery and unimportant save in such terms. In a Communist State all men may be equal but they are all equal to nothing, all equally worthless.

A Communist State has only one aim—to produce material goods for everyone by forcing everyone to work. It is the community that matters; the

individual is nothing. If the individual does not want to work, if he dislikes the work he is given, if he feels himself unfitted for it, he is forced by violence to do the State's bidding. The individual does not count. A Communist State makes its own laws and moral standards: it may destroy or change these laws and moral standards at its pleasure. It may, and does, destroy its citizens just as readily.

The Communist State has not yet reached its complete objectives. Communists say that when Communism *has* reached its perfection the State, as we know it, will "wither away." It will no longer be needed. But the truth is that the State and the power of the State will always be needed so long as human nature exists. The State is God's will for man as much as is the Church; these societies, temporal and spiritual, are distinct but they are both parts of God's plan.

Communism is spreading, sapping the strength of the State, because many people do not understand its real teaching and are led away by its promises. Communism is spreading because it exploits national and political hatreds. It also exploits certain demands in themselves right, such as justice for workers and a more fair distribution of the goods of the world. Thus it sometimes attracts even people whose only wish is to see justice done and abuses corrected, people who would never be Communists if they really understood its ideas both of the Church and of the State. Communism spreads

wherever Communists are free to push forward their propaganda by radio, movies, theatre, literature, or the press.

Such Communist propaganda has been very effective in some countries. In Russia for over a generation, in Mexico a few years ago, and in Spain for a dreadful time Communism brought terror, destruction and martyrdom. In Latin America, it is on the march. What has happened in Russia, in Spain, in Mexico, in Latin America, is only partly the result of Marxism's revolutionary tactics; it is also the result of Marxist materialism. Materialism says that only material things exist; that the spiritual is fraudulent. Hence Communism is anti-religious. Hence it actively combats the idea of God. Communism brands religion "the opium of the people," for religion fixes men's minds on Heaven after death. Communism fixes men's minds on an improbable heaven on this earth, and on nothing else. Please note that *any* theory of the State which is strictly "secularist," which excludes any place for God, religion or the spiritual, inevitably becomes no less "materialist."

A State infiltrated with Communist principles differs totally from a State inspired by the humane philosophy taught by the Church. Communists say that there is nothing except material things. The Church says that there is very much more than material things. First of all, there is God, who made man and gave him a soul. This soul He endowed with wonderful powers and with unalienable rights.

Because Communists say that a man has no soul they speedily conclude that a man has no rights apart from the State. But religion teaches that God gave man his rights when He gave him his soul:—the right to life, the right to the necessities of life, the right to ownership, the right to marriage, the right to family life.

Here is the focal point of conflict between the Christian State and Communist State. Since these rights were given by God, the Church has always defended them. The Church insists that all society, the State included, is made for man's use. Communists say that man is made for society's use. Communists deride *charity* and *loyalty* and preach in their place *class hatred* and *violence*, destructive of the State. The Church bases her concept of the State on the same principle as her concept of herself:—*all men have God for their Father, so all men are brothers.*

In preaching this spiritual concept of the State, plus her doctrine of the divine origin of all authority, the Church offers the greatest hope of strengthening the modern State. Theories which destroy the health of the State have always disappeared under the influence of her preaching. The Church preached to a world degraded by slavery that all men were brothers. Slavery disappeared save where the State prevented her from teaching. She preached to a world scornful of labor that God Himself became a worker. Today she defends the

workers from those who oppress them and deny them their rights. The Church practices what she preaches, and what she preaches is God's law. Communism has not come because the Church's teaching has failed. Communism has come because the Church's teaching has not been followed; because God's law has not been kept.

How can we defend Christian civilization against the dangers of Communism? We can do it by militantly espousing the religious concept of the State. We can do it by making ourselves truly *Catholic* in spirit, truly *Catholic* in outlook. Though there are signs of a revival of faith many people are Christian only in name. Many keep their religion for Sundays. Many keep their religion apart from their work, from their ideas of society and of the State.

States made up of people lukewarm in their religion are States in grave danger. The State has grave reasons of its own for fostering and protecting a general interest in religion. The problems which vex the State are superficially social and economic; fundamentally they are spiritual. In these days everyone wants more than he has. The rich want more wealth and more pleasure. The poor want more wealth and more pleasure. So the State is made restless. The rich and the poor alike forget that God made them for Heaven, not for mere wealth, not for mere pleasure. The rich have forgotten that they were made rich to help those

who are poor. The poor have forgotten that sorrow and suffering belong to all men—to the rich as well as to them.

The cure of this social unrest must come from the practice of charity. *What is charity?* Charity does not consist in giving away what you don't want. Charity does not consist in giving away what you don't need. Charity is not slumming. *What is charity?* Charity is seeing Christ in those who need. Charity is helping Christ in those who depend on others. Charity is loving Christ in those who suffer.

But a man cannot be charitable unless he is just. Charity must always come after justice among the virtues which strengthen the State. Social justice means that all classes must work for the common good of the State. Since a man cannot work for the common good if he cannot live decently, employers have duties in social justice to their workers to pay living wages. But the workers have duties in social justice, too. Workers are bound to see that their work is worth the wage they receive. They are bound to subordinate the purposes of their organizations to those of the State and to weigh community interests in choosing the means by which they promote their own good.

Workers and all others must serve the State at the moment by discovering the plans and attacks of the Communists and by penetrating the disguises of Communism. When Communism began it did not disguise itself. But since most people

do not agree with hatred of God or contempt of the moral law, Communism did not succeed in the beginning. Today its disguises are many. Communists use the ideal of peace to further their plans of hatred and bloodshed. Communists move in on the sponsorship of all humanitarian projects. For seemingly good objects they start societies and papers, featuring names apparently unconnected with Communism. Through these societies and papers they spread their ideas among people, whom they could not otherwise reach. Communists even invite Catholics to share in these plans. Communists say they believe in freedom of conscience. They say that the anti-God aspect of Communism is only a temporary measure. And some Americans, workers, intellectuals and others, believe them. But let them beware: There is no freedom of conscience in the Communist plan. Communism exists for one thing—to establish the Godless State. Communism exists to wipe out the family, to wipe out Christian society, to destroy Christian civilization, to take over and to deify the State.

To overcome Communism all Christians must redouble their prayers. The contemplative monks and the nuns must redouble their penances. *Communism is a spirit of evil.* It can only be cast out by prayer and by penance. Who can fight this spirit of evil? Who can help to bring Christ's peace into His kingdom? Priests can help. Lay people can help. All associations of people can help, farmers, students,

intellectuals and especially workers. All believers can help. And the State can help. Each is therefore *bound* to help.

Priests must inspire lay people to love the Church and respect the State. The priests must do more. They must be apostles, unattached to the things of the world, lovers of justice and charity. They have examples to follow: Saint Vincent de Paul, Don Bosco, the Cure of Ars, priests who went to the workers, who converted the workers because they were holy. They thought first of the people and then of themselves. The Pope asks the priests of today to do the same.

Lay people must carefully train themselves. They must know what the Church teaches on social and civic questions. They can learn this by joining study circles, by attending social institutes and congresses, by hearing lectures under Catholic auspices, by cooperating with others for the common good by studying the nature, techniques, and methods of the enemy bent on our destruction. They must then become apostles to others. They must make propaganda for the teaching of Christ concerning the divine authority of the State and the sacred duties of society, by talking about it, writing about it, making it known.

In the work of educating against materialism and Communism, religion deserves the aid of the State. At the present time the State opposes, by

a negative policy, the authority of the Church to teach about God and the supernatural order. The State should forbid anti-God propaganda for this is a nation under God. The State should reject Communist promises and avoid pacts based upon them: Where there is no faith in God there is no conscience. Where there is no conscience, there is no moral law. Where there is no moral law, how can promises mean anything? What can a State hope to gain from compacts with regimes which repudiate the first principles of civic loyalty, religious morality and the true nature of the State?

The State must appreciate that she cannot conquer Communism by violence or by her own devices alone. She must have a positive, not a negative program. Why condemn those on the right or those on the left without presenting a positive educational program by which the citizens will be correctly informed? Communism is not only a political program. Communism is not merely a social experiment. Communism is a spirit, a spirit of evil. The things of the world cannot fight the things of the spirit. The spirit of religion must fight Communism; the State cannot do it alone. Unless the Church fights, the State will be lost. Unless the Church fights, the family will be lost. Unless the Church fights, Christian civilization itself will be lost. It is the duty of the State to keep the Church free, to encourage the Church, and to help her by

moral and legal support to reach present and future citizens. This calls for cordial cooperation—not a union between Church and State. We want none of the latter. It calls for a loyal recognition of the dignity of the State by believers. It calls for a devout recognition of the City of God by the State. It calls for prayers for the Church and State. Presuming this mutual support we can put Communists on the defensive by the repetition of such questions as—Do you believe in God? Do you believe in religion, the bond between God and man? Do you believe in the immortality of the soul? Do you recognize the dignity of man as made to the image and likeness of God? Do you permit laborers to organize? Do you sponsor slave labor? Do you allow the people of Russia or of captive countries the opportunity of free election?

All these and hundreds more are questions rooted in theology. The State will not propose them. The Church must. And if those who are identified with the Church will confront Communists with such questions and be prepared to give the answers themselves from the literature of Communists from the time of Marx and Lenin to the present we will be speaking the language that will confound the leaders of international Communism and console the God-loving, freedom-loving people of captive nations, who by the way are our best friends. Religion is the one thing that all Communists fear.

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